Open the Word

Paul's world

WEB Read the background material on Paul and life in Thessalonica.

Print out copies of this week's *Paul's world – life in Thessalonica* Sheet WEB for the children to read, or hold one up, read out the text and show them the pictures. Start with the *Life today* questions, then use the *Imagine* section to take children back into Paul's first-century world. This week, we learn about the difficult situations that many living in Paul's time had to cope with.

Paul's world Life in Thessalonica – FAQs– 8-14 November 2020

Background information to support the weekly resources on 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 in print and online at www.rootsontheweb.com

ROOTS

Life today

Why people suffer and die is one of the big questions we have in our world today. Another difficult thing is living with the fact that sometimes there are no easy answers. Paul's words would have brought comfort to people who were grieving. What things bring you hope in sad situations?

Imagine

You and your family have had a lot of hard times. When you were very ill last year, you were really worried that you would not get better again. In fact, most people in your community have experienced this feeling and even the loss of someone they love. You hold on to the faith you have in Jesus, and trust his teaching in those times, but it doesn't stop you feeling sad and wanting to grieve. What is different is that even in really difficult situations, where there is illness and death, you can still have hope. These words from Paul encourage you and keep you going, even through the really hard times.

Did you know?

The time the Thessalonians were living in was very difficult and dangerous – death was a daily reality to most people. Fifty per cent of children died before they reached the age of 16. Girls had bodies from around the age of 12, and many women and girls died in childbirth. People had also been hoping for Jesus to return, and so would have had big questions about why people in their community had died before that happened.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians

A nugget to explore with children. Chapter 4, verses 13,14 and 18

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Present the reading

Open the Bible at 1 Thessalonians 4.13-14,18

Paul reminds us that when sad things happen, Jesus gives us hope.

Choose from these two ways of exploring a 'nugget' of Paul's teaching.

These words Before reading the passage, practise the following actions for key words: died – fall flat on the floor; grieve – *pretend to cry*; hope/encourage – *cheer*; Jesus – *point upwards*; rose again – *jump up*. Read the passage again, a bit faster, and challenge the children to keep up!

Highlight emotions Print out a copy of the passage for each child, and give each child two different coloured highlighters. Ask them to highlight in one colour any words that are sad, and in the other colour, any happy or hopeful words. Discuss together that sad and happy words are both part of this one short passage.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, Chapter 4, verses 13,14 and 18

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Talk together

- Why does Paul say that we can have hope when people die?
- Have you ever felt happy and sad at the same time?
- Do you know anyone who is feeling sad? What could you do to help them feel more hopeful?

For very young children

Play and think about the belief that all who have died will be with God.

Play materials: shiny materials, to represent God's glory, e.g. tinsel, silver foil, mirrors, gold wrapping paper.

Storytelling

Use a glove, finger or wooden spoon puppet for Paul, as he talks to his friends:

This week I would like to tell you a special message, to give you hope.
Do you remember the story about how Jesus died on the cross? And how he rose again and went up to heaven to be with God? Well, we believe that, through Jesus, God will bring those who have died to be with him in heaven.

Play

Give each child a teardrop-shaped stamp, or make some from potatoes. Provide blue paint and a large sheet of paper for the children to print their shapes onto. Allow the paint to dry. When you come back to it, see if the children can remember what the shapes are. Then give out coloured watered-down paints for them to paint a rainbow over the top of the teardrops. Talk about the rainbow as a sign of hope.

Create

Provide sparkly, bright, colourful craft materials and a large sheet of paper. Invite the children to create a collage, representing heaven as they see it.

Praise

Sing or listen to the chorus of the song (link on WEB) and invite the children to wave gold streamers while singing.

Pray

Offer children the chance to light a battery-operated tealight for anyone they know who has died.
Then pray:

We pray to you for all those people we love but see no longer.
May they rest in peace.
Amen.

Find more prayers opposite and additional activities on the next page.

WEB *Very young children* page with more activities, prayers and songs.